

Great Southwest group reformed

By **TERIN MILLER**
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The Great Southwest Association, dormant since 1964 when its members paid their last dues, has been officially reborn.

The rebirth of the association comes on the heels of an announcement that American Can will close its Arlington plant, an announcement that General Motors will keep the Arlington plant open and move two Detroit operations here, and a record leasing year for Vantage Co., the largest landowner in the Great Southwest Industrial District since its inception.

The rebirth of the association comes in the midst of a flurry of economic development activity within Arlington.

There now is an Economic Development Commission reporting to the city council, economic development committees within the Arlington Chamber of Commerce and a High-Tech Development Council.

The rebirth of another development-oriented group at first appears redundant.

Not so, said Bob Beaton, plant manager for American Can and member of the city's Economic Development Commission.

"One of my responsibilities was the southwest area of GSW—what we had to do to revitalize and make the area more attractive to market," Beaton said. "One of the things we noticed first was the lack of an organization to carry out any direction. We talked to several people and our first idea was to revitalize the Great Southwest Association, or work at finding another organization."

The difference between the Great Southwest Association and the other new development groups, Beaton said, is "this body could make their needs known to the two cities so that as a team, they could attract more industry in addition to attracting more jobs for the residents of Arlington and Grand Prairie.

The district originally consisted of 7,000 acres within Grand Prairie and Arlington, but its borders are being redefined because of increased interest, said Jim Black-

more, executive director of the group.

A Great Southwest Corporation formed in 1956 to develop what was then promoted as the largest planned industrial district in the country.

The group, founded by flamboyant developer Angus Wynne Jr., closed shop Jan. 13, 1986.

The association formed in 1980 but lost momentum by 1983 after accomplishing some of its goals.

An estimated 150 people attended a breakfast at the Arlington Hilton Hotel Friday to witness the rebirth.

The breakfast was attended by a "Who's Who of Arlington and Grand Prairie industry, business and politics", including the mayors of both cities and representatives from Arlington's city council.

"We're not trying to replace the Chamber of Commerce," said Blackmore. "We have unique problems that cannot be addressed by either Chamber of Commerce."

"The Arlington groups are looking at the entire city of Arlington," Blackmore said. "Their work stops at the city's line. We're not a political group, we represent the whole district. In that sense, I think we can be effective. We have a 25-year history. We didn't start a new group, we revived an existing group."

The announcement of American Can's closing, Beaton said, is sad for the employees here, but not devastating to the industrial district.

"We're only one resident of several hundred out there," said Beaton. "Someone else may come in and take our space there. We do have a nice site."



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